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Abraham Lincoln

Address by

HON. FREDERICK A. SMITH



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ABRAHAM LINCOLN

ADDRESS
BY
FREDERICK W. LEHMANN
OF ST. LOUIS

AT MEMORIAL HALL

CHICAGO, FEBRUARY TWELFTH

1908

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Abraham Lincoln

In considering the career of a man like Abraham Lincoln, we are disposed to view the end from the beginning, and to see the President of the United States and the great Emancipator in the young lawyer and politician exercising and developing his talents in the courts and on the hustings of primitive Illinois; in the boy growing to manhood in the backwoods of Indiana, and even in the child of the lowly Kentucky home. But the future was a sealed book for him, as much as for any of his fellows, and unfolded to him no more of promise than to them. He rose to distinction by slow degrees, and his life had drawn near to its close before it became visible to any that he was destined to perform a great and peculiar part in the world's work.

Thomas Ford died in the year 1850, leaving in manuscript a history of Illinois, which was published a few years later. Ford had been Governor of Illinois, a resident of the State for many years, and a constant attendant upon its legislative sessions. He believed himself to be ac-

quainted not only with events and results, but as well "with the characters and motives of those who were most active in bringing them about." He was an impartial critic, as, in dealing with Whig or Democrat, he was alike sparing of his praise, and unsparing of his censure. Had Lincoln died when this history was written, we should have known of him only what its pages record. They present him as a member of the legislature in 1836, one of the delegation from Sangamon County, known, because of their stature, as "the long nine." Ford could see in them nothing but "dexterous jugglers and managers in politics," whose one purpose was to remove the capitol to Springfield, to accomplish which they log-rolled on every pending measure, and so made themselves more responsible than any others for the scheme of internal improvement entered upon that year. Douglas was a member of the same legislature, and went with the majority, it being the aim of men like himself and Lincoln "just to keep along even with the humor of the people, right or wrong." The scheme of internal improvement proved almost immediately to be a disastrous failure, but those who had supported it suffered nothing in public favor, many of them being subsequently elected to higher offices, Lincoln being twice thereafter re-elected to the Legislature, and later sent to

Congress, and Douglas three times elected to Congress, and then to the United States Senate. In the opinion of Governor Ford, these men were all "spared monuments of popular wrath, evincing how safe it is to a politician, but how disastrous it may be to the country, to keep along with the present fervor of the people."

Not a flattering picture this, but there is in it much of truth. Douglas and Lincoln were both of them politicians of a practical type, and as such, must keep along even with the humor of the people, but the portrayal as to Lincoln certainly is unjust, because it does not disclose the whole truth. Douglas, as to the great question with which they became identified, declared that he did not care whether the people voted it up or voted it down, but Lincoln did care, and so, while he might remain with the people even when they were not abreast of his own convictions, it was with the hope and the purpose to bring them to the right, and in the faith that he could guide them better when with them than when away from them. How much this meant had not become apparent when Governor Ford died. The work which Lincoln was appointed to do was preparing, but the time appointed for doing it had not yet come.

The story of slavery in America begins with the first chapter of its history. The people of

the North were no more averse to it than those of the South, but climatic and economic conditions were unfavorable at the North, and from the beginning of the Revolutionary war the institution declined in that section, lingering longest in New Jersey, where the last relic of it passed away in 1860.

At the South, climatic conditions from the first, and later economic conditions, favored its growth, but it was viewed, none the less, with grave apprehension by many Southern statesmen. Thomas Jefferson was conspicuous for his efforts against it, although he was himself a slaveholder. In his "Summary View" of the case of the colonists against the mother country, he arraigned the British King for his veto of colonial enactments against the slave-trade, and he repeated this in elaborate form in the first draft of the Declaration of Independence, but omitted it from the reported form out of deference to some of his Southern colleagues.

In 1784, in the ordinance introduced by him for the government of the Western Territory, he provided that after the year 1800, in the States to be formed from this territory, there should be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude except as a punishment for crime. It required the vote of seven States to carry the proposition. Six States voted for it and three against it, one,

North Carolina, was divided, New Jersey, because of the sickness of one of its delegates, lost its vote, and two States had no delegates present. New Jersey, had its sick member attended, would have voted for the provision, and the change of a single vote in either the Virginia or North Carolina delegation, would have carried the State for it. It is doubtful if ever before, or since, so much of weal or woe was dependent upon the vote of one man. Had Jefferson's plan prevailed, slavery, by being confined to the Southern Atlantic States, would have been placed in the sure course of peaceable extinction, but this was not to be.

The efforts of Jefferson, however, were not entirely barren of results. Three years later Nathan Dane brought forward an ordinance for the government of the Northwestern Territory, being all the country lying North of the Ohio river, and he had incorporated in this Jefferson's provision against slavery, making it, however, immediately effective. Eight States were present, three from the North and five from the South, and the provision now received the unanimous vote of the States, and the vote of every individual delegate as well, save one, and this perverse spirit was not from the South, but from the North.

Taken together, these ordinances of 1784 and 1787 constitute a compromise, by which Mason

and Dixon's line as the boundary between freedom and slavery was extended along the Ohio river to the Western border of the Nation.

While the last Continental Congress was in session, the Federal Convention was engaged in the work of framing a Constitution under which the people of the United States were to be organized as a Nation. What was done in this Convention was, of necessity, by common consent. The institution of slavery must be taken into account, and in a manner satisfactory to its friends. There was an abolition sentiment in the South, not well defined as to plan, but certainly regretting the existence of slavery, and hoping that in some way, and without too much of sacrifice, it would pass away. This, beyond a doubt, had its restraining influence upon the friends of the institution, and helped to moderate their demands. Only three provisions of the Constitution had reference to slavery. In the enumeration for purposes of representation in Congress and of direct taxation, a slave was to be counted as three-fifths of a person; the slave trade was protected against National interference, except by way of a head tax not exceeding ten dollars, until the year 1808; and fugitive slaves were to be delivered to their owners on demand. The words "slave" and "slavery" were, however, not to be found in the Constitution. The slave was

always a "person"; in the fugitive slave clause he was "a person held to service or labor in a State under the laws thereof." The framers knew what they were doing, and most of them were ashamed of it, but some compromise was necessary, or the Union could not be formed.

And now for a time there was quiet on the subject. Colonization societies, South as well as North, proposed in an amiable and harmless sort of way, the deportation of free negroes to Africa, and the encouragement of emancipation by the act of individual owners. But during this period of quiet events were happening in another field, which changed completely the attitude of the South toward its peculiar institution. English inventions made at intervals from 1775 to 1783 gave an enormous stimulus to the manufacture of cotton fabrics in that country and a corresponding demand for the raw material which the fields of the South were well adapted to supply. Very little, however, was being shipped, as a slave could fit but five or six pounds a day for the market. The export of cotton in 1792 was less than 140,000 pounds. In 1793, Eli Whitney, a Yankee school teacher, then living in Georgia, invented the saw-gin, which enabled a slave to clean a thousand pounds of cotton per day. The exports of cotton increased at once, rising to nearly a half million pounds in that

year, and more than six million two years thereafter, and so it continued, until, in 1859, it was nearly 1,400,000,000 pounds. Here, now, was a simple tillage from which the ambition of free labor turned, and in which slave labor could be employed with great profit. "The plainest print," said Lincoln, in one of his speeches, "cannot be read through a gold eagle." The evils of slavery were no longer visible to those interested in it, and the relation of master was discovered to be one of duty, which had its sanctions in the Bible itself, and hereafter the institution was not content simply to wear out an inane existence where it chanced to be, but, inspired by its new life and vigor, claimed the right to establish itself in any territory of the United States not already occupied as the domain of a free State. It was now not to be excused, but to be justified; not to be restricted, but to be extended widely as its needs might demand.

The first direct contest within the Union was over the admission of Missouri as a State, and this resulted in the Compromise of 1820, by which the parallel of $36^{\circ} 30'$ was established as a line north of which slavery should not extend, excepting, however, the State of Missouri itself, which save a small projection at the Southeast, lay entirely North of this parallel. Slavery acquired another State, while Freedom got a prom-

ise, but a promise of great value if kept. But neither the friends nor the opponents of slavery were satisfied with the results, and the controversy between them was renewed with greater bitterness than ever in connection with the Mexican war. The Wilmot Proviso, which was simply the anti-slavery clause of the ordinance of 1787, was insisted upon by the opponents of slavery as a condition of acquiring any territory from Mexico, but it failed of adoption. Nevertheless, California, the first State to be carved from the new acquisition, presented itself for admission with a free Constitution. Another compromise was necessary, and Henry Clay, who had arranged that of 1820, came forward to make a new and lasting one in 1850. His plan was expressed in a series of eight resolutions, the important provisions of which were the admission of California, the organization of territories in the rest of the Mexican annexation without reference to slavery, non-interference with slavery where it existed and with the interstate slave trade, and a more efficient fugitive slave law. The proposed measures were adopted, and seemed for the time so satisfactory that both Whigs and Democrats in their National platforms of 1852, declared them to be the final solution of the controversy.

Only two years passed after this expression

of general approval, when the controversy was reopened by the Kansas-Nebraska bill, which proposed the repeal of the Missouri Compromise as in conflict with that of 1850, because it failed to recognize the principle of non-intervention by Congress in the matter of slavery in the Territories. Thereafter, the people of each Territory were to determine this for themselves, and upon their action would depend whether it should be dedicated to slavery or to freedom. This bill, supported by all the power and patronage of the administration, was enacted into law. Three years later followed the decision in the Dred Scott case, which, going beyond the principle of the Kansas-Nebraska bill, held that even the people of the Territory could not, prior to its organization and admission as a State, exclude slavery from their midst. The barriers now were all down. Every restriction as to new territory had failed. The recognition of slavery as a rightful institution, fostered by the Constitution and entitled to all the sanctions of the law, was declared to be the indispensable condition of the maintenance of the Union.

Every variety of opinion had come to exist among our people. Some were for freedom, regardless of the Union, and some in the same way were for slavery. Some were for the Union, regardless of slavery or freedom. Some hoped

for a Union with slavery as a permanent institution, and some for a Union in which universal freedom, if not a present blessing, would be, at least, an assured, albeit a distant, hope and prospect.

As the Nation was nearing this last great crisis, Abraham Lincoln appeared among the forces of Union and Freedom, and to him they turned more and more for guidance and leadership. And who was he that he should attempt the accomplishment of a work which so often throughout the life of the Nation its greatest statesman had undertaken, and had failed to do?

He was an American, in whose veins blended the blood of the North and the South. He was born to the hardships and privations of pioneer civilization, and suffered and sustained them throughout his youth, and well into manhood. Education, so far as schools afforded it, did but little for him, but he learned well the lessons of self-help and self-reliance, which the isolation of the backwoods enforced upon its people. But neither in his ancestry nor in his surroundings, was he singular. There were many men of his time whose heredity and environment were essentially like his own. What, then, made him the man he was? We can answer this question when we can answer why, among all the Englishmen of his day, there was but one Shakespeare, and why,

in a later generation of Scotchmen, there was but one Burns. That which distinguishes a man among his neighbors, that in which he differs from those who were born and bred as he was, is too subtle for determination by human analysis. It discloses itself as he develops with the years, but it is not the product of the years. We say it was born with the man, and we see that it was not born with his brother. Something may be bred into the bone, and something may be trained into the flesh, but neither breeding nor training, nor both of them, explain for us the master spirits of the world. Heredity, and environment are the two parts of a common mold in which the clay of humanity is cast, but it must be that beyond these there is, now and then, at the interval of many years, the touch and impress of the creative hand itself, imparting something of the divine spark we call genius.

What was Lincoln's great quality? He had none. His greatness consisted in the possession of simple qualities in great measure. It was just this that fitted him for the patient leadership required by the times. The people always held him to be one of themselves, because of the homeliness of his character. He was simple in manner, plain in speech, gentle in conduct, kind in feeling, sincere in purpose, honest in thought, and charitable in judgment. These

qualities inspired personal fondness and affection, and established a familiarity of relation with the public which was maintained to the last day of his life. The abolitionist who pilloried him as a slavehound, knew him as little as did the slaveowner who stigmatized him as a "nigger thief." His mental view was clarified by his kindness of feeling and honesty of thought. In the Babel of contradictions which prevailed—he saw the right and the wrong of every side. There was past fault in the North to temper the present wrong of the South, and there were problems to follow universal emancipation which he was not anxious to precipitate. He could accurately estimate the difficulties of the situation, and as accurately his ability to deal with them. He spoke as a strong man when he said at Peoria that "if all earthly power were given me, I should not know what to do as to the existing institution."

There were many upon his side of the great conflict more aggressive than he. Had they the power, they would abolish slavery at once, and leave the consequences to God. This skulking behind Providence in great emergencies was an easy conception of duty which never commended itself to Lincoln. He hoped for guidance from on high, and by the light given, not by that withheld, was he to direct his feet. He held himself

justly to be as responsible for the consequences of his acts as for the acts themselves. So far as the kindly light shed its radiance, he moved with perfect courage and with assured confidence. It gave him to see always that slavery was wrong, that however inferior the negro might be to him in physical or intellectual endowment, in the right to eat the bread his toil had earned, he was the equal of himself or of Douglas, or of any other man. The Declaration of Independence asserted for him, not the equality of all men in all things, for this was manifestly not the fact, but it did assert the equal right of all men, black as well as white, to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Full recognition of this in all our laws and throughout all the land was apparently impossible to be attained at once, but the direction of movement must always be toward this, and there must be no yielding of any ground once gained. He knew that however just it might be as between the border ruffian and the jayhawker to determine by stuffed ballot or by bullet fired from ambush, whether Kansas should admit or exclude slavery, neither ballot nor bullet could make slavery right, and he would have none of a popular sovereignty in which the person most interested had no voice. Men thought him weak, because in so many things he was complaisant, but they

found that when the depths of his nature were stirred and his convictions aroused, he was absolutely self-reliant and indomitable in his purpose, and proved himself, not the creature, but the master, of circumstance.

The depressing conditions of his early life imbued him with sadness and melancholy, but the gloom of these was lightened by that humor which is so close akin to pathos. That he was given to telling stories, and that these had sometimes the smell of the barnyard, but never the odor of the brothel, we must believe, for the traditions are too insistent for dispute, but he was not the people's jester, as some who did not know him were disposed to believe. The man who once puts on the cap and bells cannot doff them, as more than one in our public life has found, to his cost. It was the earnestness of his nature, the seriousness of his purpose, which impressed the nation, for men never followed a clown or buffoon through fire and blood, as they followed him. Had he been lightminded, he would have broken under the burdens of his lot. Great strength of will was requisite to acquire the education he got, in spite of the invidious bars against him. A few months of school, the Bible, Aesop, Shakespeare, Bunyan and Burns, and what was the result? The highest culture to be found in the political literature of America. And

he knew his power. No man could express his thoughts for him. Ambitious young reporters in the West attempted it, but with kindly hand he put their paraphrase aside and held to his own words. The scholar of his party in the East advised eliminating, as in bad taste, the closing words of the first inaugural, but his judgment of their propriety was not shaken. Read his public letters, papers and addresses. They are profoundly serious. A gleam of humor, very seldom an anecdote, and when occurring brought at once to its point; nothing coarse, with but one exception, and this apologized for in the speech itself; rarely quotations from others, and always brief when his own ideas are to be expressed, and throughout, a simple, strong statement of his meaning in the purest, cleanest Saxon English to be found outside the Bible, and, in some of its strains, as in the second inaugural, rising to the loftiest ranges of the Bible itself.

He accepted leadership when it was proffered, and he did not hesitate to assert it when he believed it to be his due. "Do you suppose," he wrote to Herndon, in 1848, "that I should ever have got into notice if I had waited to be hunted up and pushed forward by older men?" As a boy growing up to manhood he was the leader of his household, leading through his service, finding nothing that needed to be done too menial

or too arduous for his undertaking. He was the leader in the rough sports and games of his young companions in Indiana and Illinois, and in the Black Hawk war he was chosen by his comrades to be the captain of his Company. Offering himself upon his return from a campaign which afforded no opportunity for glory, as a candidate for the Legislature, although failing of election, he yet secured a large majority of the votes, so far as he had been able to make himself known. Elected thereafter four times to the Assembly, he soon secured a position of command, and was more than once the choice of his party for speaker. Repeatedly he was the nominee of his party as Presidential elector. He proved his capacity more and more with the passing years. Douglas in the first debate of 1858, speaking in all sincerity, said, "Lincoln is one of those peculiar men who perform with admirable skill everything which they undertake." He demonstrated this in his career as a lawyer. In the field of practice which he chose for himself, he was conspicuously successful. In the matter of income, indeed, he was surpassed by many of his contemporaries, for his own pecuniary interest in his business was for him its least attractive feature. He cherished high ideals of his calling. The law to him was the ministry of justice. In the present day voca-

tion of advising how the mandates of the law may be evaded without incurring its penalties, he would have made a sorry showing. His abilities displayed themselves at their best in the open contests of the courtroom, when human rights were involved. He was a trial lawyer with skill to follow the truth through a tangled mass of testimony, and an advocate with power to enforce upon others the convictions of his own mind.

To the Nation at large, he seemed, in 1858, to emerge suddenly and unexpectedly from a profound obscurity to oppose the brilliant Democratic leader whose audacious turn against the administration of his own party upon the issue of the Lecompton Constitution had made many Republicans wonder if here was not the pilot to steer them safely between the Scylla of abolitionism and the Charybdis of perpetual slavery. But in Illinois he had been for years, and naturally, the opponent of Douglas. He was engaged with him in 1854 on the Kansas-Nebraska bill, and had won a victory, the fruits of which, that they might not be lost to the cause, he permitted another to enjoy. In 1858 he showed that the issue upon the Lecompton Constitution was one of fact, whose solution one way or the other, left unsettled the great question whether slavery should be restricted or whether it should be left

free to extend itself. He felt himself to be the man for the emergency, and responded promptly to the call, and as he entered the lists he sounded the challenge he had pondered long and deeply, "a house divided against itself cannot stand," and with it he inspired more of fear among his followers than among his foes. But whatever others thought, for him the hour had struck; the power of slavery had increased, was increasing, and must be diminished. Compromise had exerted all its artifices in vain—it was now surrender or fight. He had missed the fruits of victory in 1854, and now, his friends said, he would miss the victory itself—but no matter. He looked beyond, and to a larger field, and whatever might betide, he would clear the way for victory there. After a contest of debate, matchless in history for the importance of its subject and the skill of its conduct, he was overthrown, and rose from the dust of defeat, no longer the leader of his party in his province, but the leader of a great people in their highest aspiration and most heroic endeavor.

The fundamental proposition presented by Douglas was that slavery was an institution to be dealt with by the white people of the country as they saw fit. The fundamental proposition presented by Mr. Lincoln was that the institution was inherently wrong, and was to be dealt

with in that view, and that no agreement among the whites could rightfully make slaves of the blacks. Upon this proposition Lincoln was nominated for the Presidency in 1860, and all who agreed with it gathered earnestly and enthusiastically to his support. Among his opponents, however, there was great division. Douglas, nominated by the Northern Democrats, reasserted his doctrine of popular sovereignty, qualified by a declaration of submission to the decisions of the Supreme Court upon the subject, whatever they might be; Breckenridge, put forward by the Southern Democracy, asserted the rightfulness of slavery, and demanded for it the full protection and support of the government; while John Bell, of Tennessee, represented a large body of respectable gentlemen, some of whom thought slavery was right, and others of whom thought it was wrong, but all of whom agreed that the existing troubles came from talking about it, and so they presented a platform of "keep still and do nothing," anticipating the opinion so generally inculcated at the present time that quite as much harm may be done by preaching the ten commandments as by violating them.

With such dissension among his opponents, the election of Lincoln was a foregone conclusion, but by a minority and a sectional vote. He

carried every Northern State except New Jersey, and there he got four electoral votes, securing altogether 180 out of a total of 303, a majority of 57 over all. Douglas got the remaining three votes of New Jersey, and the nine votes from Missouri. Bell carried the States of Virginia, Tennessee and Kentucky, with 39 votes, and Breckenridge carried all the Southern States and the border States of Delaware and Maryland, giving him 72 votes. The total popular vote, not including that of South Carolina, whose electors were chosen by the Legislature, was 4,680,193. Of these Lincoln had 1,866,452, Douglas 1,375,157, Breckenridge 847,953, which the vote of South Carolina would swell to above 900,000, and Bell had 590,631. Douglas, second before the people, was the lowest in the electoral college. Had the opposition vote been combined upon one candidate, Lincoln would still have been elected, for the combination would have taken from him only the four votes from New Jersey, four from California and three from Oregon, leaving him 169 against 134. In the five border States, Lincoln secured but 26430 votes, and in the Southern States not a single vote was cast for him. Douglas, Breckenridge and Bell all received votes in the border and the Northern States, and in such numbers that, omitting from the count all of the Southern States and Vir-

ginia, Lincoln failed by 46,000 of getting a majority of the popular vote. It was a divided North, with the majority against slavery, against a practically united South in favor of slavery.

An ominous result. Defeat in 1858 spelled victory, and now in 1860 victory seemed to spell defeat. Four months intervened between the election of Lincoln and his inauguration, and during that time he could do nothing. The government was in weak, if not hostile hands. State after State seceded and put itself in preparation for defense against any attempt to hold it in the Union. The arms, the arsenals, the forts of the Nation, were seized, and not a hand was lifted to hinder. Slavery had decreed the dissolution of the Union, and was putting its decree into effect. The South showed energy, determination and united action. In the North there was hesitation, apprehension, division, distraction, even among those who had supported Lincoln. Peace, and at any price, was demanded. More compromises were proposed, the surrender of everything that had been gained at the election, even consent to secession. Thurlow Weed declared that "a victorious party can afford to be tolerant." The New York Herald said that coercion was out of the question. General Scott suggested a division of the country into four confederacies. Greeley begged that the erring sis-

ters be permitted to go in peace. William Lloyd Garrison said that the people of the North should recognize the fact that "THE UNION IS DISSOLVED." And much more there was of the same kind, and worse, if worse could be, and to deal with it all, a country lawyer, without military training, without experience in administration, and whose most distinguished official service had been one undistinguished term in Congress.

He bade farewell to his friends at Springfield in words suggesting a foreboding that he would never return. He went "to assume a task more difficult than that which devolved upon General Washington." His trust for its performance was in the people. Upon them depended the salvation of the Union, and upon them depended the preservation of what had been gained for freedom by his election. He was willing to secure the Southern States in what he believed were their rights under the Constitution, and by amendments to express in that instrument what he believed to be implied therein. Beyond this, he would not go. He would not consent to disunion, and he would not renounce the authority of the general government over the territories.

But to maintain the Union under the existing conditions, the people of the Northern States must be united, and the border States of Mary-

land, Kentucky and Missouri must be held to their National allegiance. For this difficult task Lincoln was supremely fitted. He knew how to keep along with the present humor of the people, and to warm it with something of his own fervor. The cause of the war, as we all see it now, was slavery, but while the South was organizing to fight for its preservation, the North, as yet, was unwilling to fight for its destruction. War, from the standpoint of the Northern people, must be waged, if at all, for the Union and the Constitution, for the Union of all the States, with the rights of all of them unimpaired. And so, after his inauguration, Lincoln moved slowly. He would, if he could, retake the property of the Nation which had been seized. He would defend that which still remained in charge of the Nation's representatives. He would not, for the present, attempt by force to exercise the functions of the government where they would be resisted. He was not matched by equal patience. The South was in no temper for a waiting game. Sumter was fired upon, and the flag brought down. The patriotism of the North was kindled to flame by this act of aggression, and now, laying aside their indifference and abandoning their fears, the people joined in the war for the Union.

The story of Lincoln's life during the four

years that followed, is the story of a Nation's great travail, and cannot be recounted here. Through it all, he had need of his patience and gentleness, and his clear, direct insight into popular feeling. The quality that made him "Father Abraham" held him even with the people, and held them even with him. Cabinet officers proposed to determine for him the policy of his administration, and to carry it out, and Generals proposed to construct or reconstruct his cabinet, distinguished citizens were ready with criticisms of the man who moved either too fast or too slow. The great men of the country were long in coming to an appreciation of him. His profoundest policy seemed to them often to be rustic ignorance and incapacity. There was a patronizing quality in their interference, which must have been very offensive to a nature sensitive as his, but he never complained. Referring in a letter to some newspaper comments, in November, 1863, he said, "They constitute a fair specimen of what has occurred to me through life. I have endured a great deal of ridicule without much malice, and have received a great deal of kindness not quite free from ridicule. I am used to it." Slaveowners, of real or professed Union sentiments, complained of interference by the army with their institution; political generals embarrassed him by unauthorized procla-

mations of emancipation. But he held, as he wrote to Greeley, to his paramount object, which was to save the Union, and was not either to save or destroy slavery, intending "no modification of my oft-expressed personal wish that all men, everywhere, could be free." Disasters gathered thick upon the fields of battle, and the tide of public feeling seemed at times to turn against him, but he lost neither heart nor hope, nor even his temper, and when, in the worst period of the war, instead of giving helpful suggestions, Carl Schurz heaped blame upon his head, he answered with nothing more severe than that there are men who "think you are performing your part as poorly as you think I am performing mine." His office made him commander-in-chief of the armies, and his letters show how diligent he was in his duties, and how fully and seriously he bore all the responsibilities of the position. Especially was this true in the relation which the States bore to the war. His letters to the Governors are always vigorous and pointed. When Governor Andrew explained delay in forwarding regiments because he could not get quick work out of the disbursing officer and the paymaster, he answered, "Please say to those gentlemen that if they do not work quickly, I will make quick work with them." Office seekers pressed upon him in the midst of his sorest troubles; he

was harassed at every turn by ambitious men whose chief desire was their own distinction, and unscrupulous men who gather to a war as vultures to a carcass. And with all he was patient and gentle and just. To his lot it fell, and grateful this was to his nature, to mitigate the cruel justice of the court-martial. A soldier, a mere boy, had fallen asleep at his post, or, seduced by seditious arguments from friends at home, had deserted. The appeal for mercy from father or mother never fell upon unheeding ears. The message went out, "Let execution be suspended until further orders from me," and the further orders were never sent.

The one policy of Lincoln's administration most distinctively his own, was that relating to emancipation, and it was the most difficult of all to deal with. Here he was continually pressed in contrary directions by friends, whose support was indispensable to him. That slavery was in some way the real cause of the war, was felt by everybody. Yet the war must not be waged to destroy slavery, and slavery must not survive a war of which it was the cause. The border States upheld the institution, and many men throughout the North were unwilling to fight for the freedom of the negro, and at the same time the number of those in favor of abolition was constantly increasing. Lincoln proposed a mid-

dle course of compensated emancipation, but even this could not reconcile the opposing factions. This course was, as much as any other, destructive of slavery, and the men who would not fight for the freedom of the negro were almost as unwilling to pay for it. The abolitionists, on the other hand, would consent to nothing that recognized any element of justice or right on the side of the slaveowner. Emerson voiced the feeling of these men at a meeting held in Music Hall on January 1st, 1863, to celebrate the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation:

“Pay ransom to the owner,
And fill the bag to the brim.
Who is the owner? The slave is owner.
He always was. Pay him.”

Lincoln understood this quite as well as Emerson, and in his second inaugural gave timely expression to the sentiment in prose much loftier than Emerson's verse. He also understood that while the Constitution which had brought the North and South into union was unjust to the black men, whose bondage it sanctioned and continued, it yet carried with it something of obligation from the North to the South, and this obligation he was willing to recognize to the utmost. His humanity prompted him to yield abstractions. He would not continue the sacrifice of life to a theory, if, by the expenditure of mere treasure,

he could bring about the condition he desired. This view of the case he pressed upon the abolitionist, while to the border men he pointed out that slavery was doomed, even though it should survive the shock of war. Seeking to conciliate both sides, he seemed to both to be uncertain, hesitating and vacillating. Sir Walter Scott, in his *Kenilworth*, likens the mind of Queen Elizabeth to one of the balanced rocks of the Druids. "The finger of Cupid, boy though he was painted, could set her feelings in motion, but the power of Hercules could not destroy their equilibrium." So Lincoln seemed to incline from the one side to the other of the conflicting forces about him, but easily as he responded to the pressure of any of them, there was not power enough in them to overthrow his balance. He had fixed his purpose upon the maintenance of the Union, and to this purpose any plan relative to slavery must be secondary. Unable to persuade the radicals of either side, he was yet able to hold them to his policy of waiting upon events. His course respecting slavery was not inspired by indifference to the institution. He wished for its extinction as much as did Garrison and Phillips, and this, so far from concealing, he gave expression to upon every appropriate occasion. But Garrison and Phillips were willing to dissolve the Union when that would simply rid them

of political connection with slavery, and leave the institution entrenched under the government formed by the Southern States. As so often happens, extremes were working to the same end—separation. The radicals of the North were opposed to the Union because it sanctioned slavery, and those of the South because it menaced the continuance of slavery. Lincoln was opposed to slavery, not in the Union, but everywhere. Nothing could be gained for freedom by casting off the slave States. More, much more, would be done by holding together. Against the people of the South he had no unkindly feeling. They were not wholly and solely responsible for the situation. Long usage and interest had influenced their judgments, just as a like usage and interest would have influenced the judgments of the people of the North. Restrict slavery, and time would work its abolition, and this great work of healing would be done sooner in association than apart. With this view that freedom was to be realized through Union, he never shared in the bitterness of feeling engendered by the struggle over slavery, and to the last was willing to recognize and to perform the measure of justice which was due to the people of the South from their brethren of the North. The war fortunately ended in universal emancipation. Union and Freedom became the same cause; the

one impossible of maintenance without the attainment of the other, but both might easily have been lost if the attempt to realize both had been made too soon, and that they were not, humanity owes to the wisdom, the patience and the gentleness of Abraham Lincoln.

When a second time he was elected to the Presidency, the end was not yet, but it was near, and the prescience of victory sounded, though not exultantly, in the solemn tones of his inaugural address. The thirteenth amendment to the Constitution was approved by Congress, and was being ratified by State after State. It was the anti-slavery clause of the ordinance of 1787; it was the Wilmot Proviso for which he had voted forty-two times during his single term in Congress, not limited now to the Northwest Territory nor to the domain wrested from Mexico, but widely extended in its scope as the Union might have power. Events moved rapidly. The army of Virginia made its last stand, and he put the seal of his approval upon the wise terms offered for its surrender. The remaining armies of the South were breaking up from desertion, and their surrender was imminent. The final consummation of his work was at hand, but into the perfect fullness of it he was not to come.

When the children of Israel had finished the period of their wandering and passed from the

land of Moab into the promised land of Canaan, Caleb and Joshua were at the head of the marching columns. But where was the man who had led them out of the bondage of Egypt, and had guided them through all the perils of the wilderness? "And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the Lord showed him the land of Gilead unto Dan, and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and all the land of Judah unto the utmost sea, and the south, and the plain of the Valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar. And the Lord said unto him, This is the land which I swore unto Abraham, unto Isaac and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed; I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither. So Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. * * * * And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab for thirty days. * * * * And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face."



P. V. Smith

THE GRAND ARMY HALL

AND

MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION

LINCOLN BIRTHDAY SERVICE

IN MEMORIAL HALL

ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY THE TWELFTH

NINETEEN HUNDRED AND THIRTEEN

AT THREE O'CLOCK P. M.

ADDRESS BY

HON. FREDERICK A. SMITH

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Address of Hon. Frederick A. Smith

Comrades, Ladies and Gentlemen: As often as the natal day of Abraham Lincoln comes around, we meet in a sober and reverent mood. Our memory of him walks apart, by itself, in paths of subdued reflection, for "he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." He was a great burden-bearer for the nation. Its problems and trials were his, and he did not turn aside from them or avoid them. He asked himself the direct question, "Is this right? Is that right? Is slavery right? Is secession right?" And with him the answer in his own conscience was as direct as the question.

He was not afraid of his own conclusions. When he found the line between right and wrong there was no layer of compromise, concealment and cowardice to obscure it. Whatever duty it involved was courageously recognized and assumed. He seemed to see the operation of the moral law, and he knew that it revenged itself on whomsoever violated it. And now, today, he calls this nation to the simplicity of moral candor in the problems before us, and commands us to have faith in the right, "as God shall give us to see the right," and to do it.

When we meet on this day, it is not to think lightly, frivolously, but soberly and earnestly. No other mood or spirit is consonant with the occasion. May I then, for a few moments, assume to lead your thought

along a line which it is no irreverence or assumption to say Lincoln, if he could return from that bourne from which, alas, the sages come not back to bring us wisdom, would suggest to us who bear the burden of today.

There is a large class of our citizens which causes new anxiety to the thoughtful and observant. This uneasiness was voiced in the last December number of the *Century Magazine*. The writer, after referring to Macaulay's disbelief in universal suffrage, says, that during the very years when voting by the mass of the citizens has been marching on to political supremacy, "there has been coming in a new set of doubts or anxieties concerning the whole process." He advances the idea that if the ballot is sovereign, "care must be taken that it functions safely." "Granted," he says, "that its decisions are conclusive, the more reason for seeing to it, that they are freely and clearly pronounced. If we are to listen to the voice of the people in their votes, nothing must be permitted to obstruct or confuse that utterance." After referring to the progress of measures looking to the purity of the ballot box, he says "despite all those and the other advances, a distinctly new uneasiness about the whole process of voting has recently been making itself manifest. Many thoughtful citizens have been troubled by doubts, not whether it can be made freely representative of the popular will, not whether the citizen can freely cast a pure ballot, but whether he cares enough about it to cast any ballot at all." He then refers to figures showing that the number of votes is not increasing as fast as population, and further showing an increasing disinclination to make full exercise of the right of suffrage; and

concludes that it is a notorious fact that the number of registrations falls far below what it should be, and that the ballots finally cast and counted reveal a surprisingly large number of indifferents or stay-at-homes.

In other words, comrades and friends, there is an ever increasing number of us, whose duty it is to express our opinions and judgments in the ballot box, who neglect or refuse to do our duty. As one result, we have weak and corrupt men in office. The governments of our large cities fail in every essential for which they were created. Law is violated with impunity and thrust aside. Criminals commit their crimes boldly, and are virtually unhindered by the police. The only safe man on the streets is the burglar, the robber and the murderer. Men are hired by the leaders of labor unions to kill for a wage little more than is paid in business to a skilled mechanic for a day's work—so cheap and inconsequential is human life, and so little do they fear the authorities. From the Atlantic to the Pacific, organizations of men conspire to wreck structures of every kind with dynamite, involving the murder of hundreds and thousands of people—not for higher wages, not for better conditions of labor, but for "the good of the union"; and our local governments have been powerless to detect or punish, except in two instances. All of the participants in the conspiracy are guilty of murder, and several of them have confessed to the conspiracy. Are they being prosecuted for their great crimes? We all know that they are not. They have been prosecuted by the general government for the statutory offense of transporting dynamite on passenger trains, for which a penalty of a fine and imprisonment is provided.

Are the acts of these officers repudiated by their unions? On the contrary, some of these officers have been re-elected to office in their unions, according to the public press.

Is there not in all this—and much more that might be recited if time permitted—ground for saying that our local governments are inadequate, not properly officered, are breaking down, are drifting into the complete control of the criminal classes in our large cities? How long shall we permit these things to be? What do you think of a government which permits such things to be, and suffers the criminals to go unpunished, nay, does not put forth any efforts to punish the guilty ones?

But, comrades and friends, our public officers are not the only ones to be blamed for this state of affairs. What do you think of our good citizens, leading citizens, who when perpetrators of the most brutal and dastardly crimes are apprehended, tried and convicted, immediately set on foot movements for pardons and for modifications of sentences, so that the criminals may be set free again to prey upon the community? What do you think of the sickly sentimentality against punishment for crime, which prompts such proceedings on the part of our good citizens, thus paralyzing and nullifying all efforts to detect and punish criminals?

The reformation of criminals is beautiful and charitable; but the protection of society should be the first and the important consideration. To save our government and society from these enemies should be our first duty. After that you may reform the criminals, if you can; but let me say to you, in all seriousness, as the result of long observation, you

must look elsewhere for your good citizens. You must look to the boys and young men who have spent more days at school and in good honest work than they have in the saloons.

I have suggested certain specific problems. I might enumerate more, if time permitted. I will close this branch of my remarks with this general observation: There never was a time in the world's history when humanity was confronted with so many vital and pressing questions as it is today. They cannot be solved by handing them over to politicians, who are running for office, and are using their utmost ingenuity to catch votes by proposing this or that vote-getting proposition to aid them in their immediate purposes. The solution must come from an entirely different class of people, whose motives cannot be questioned and who have no purpose or interest to serve other than the public good. The solution must be thought out by a sufficiently large body of our citizens to command attention and to convert a majority of the people. This means that every good citizen must realize his responsibility and discharge his full duty to the public day by day. "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty." Freedom must be perpetually won or it must be lost.

Comrades and Fellow Citizens, what I have said is not new or strange to you. These thoughts are your thoughts. I have deemed it my duty to remind you on this occasion of some of our civic conditions, to the end that we may be moved to greater vigilance in the discharge of our civic duties.

Before resuming my seat, permit me in a few words to call your attention to this Memorial Hall, and the organization under which these exercises are

being held, and to indicate to you the work that is being done here and the character of the work.

In the first place, the organizations that have met in this hall during the past year are five Grand Army Posts and seven or eight Camps of the Sons of Veterans, or the United States War Veterans, with a total attendance of upwards of 9,600 people. Other organizations have met here with an attendance of upwards of 4,000 people. General visitors in this hall and museum have numbered upwards of 125,000 during the year. With these visitors thus we have an attendance here annually of about 139,000 people. Among the visitors who have visited the hall and the museum are classes and departments of the following schools: Scanlan, Anderson, Fuller, Sullivan, Holden, Earle, Englewood High School, Carter, Ray, Pullman, St. Michaels, Goethe, Morse, and library students.

If, friends, you could be bystanders, quiet bystanders, when these school children assemble in this hall and in the museum, and observe the very great interest and avidity with which they view the relics of the war, you would be gratified to know that in these children who a few years hence will be exercising the rights of citizenship, is an eager class of students, desirous of knowing the history of their country. This exhibit enables these young people to visualize and make definite that which they have read in their histories. The influence for good citizenship, for the upbuilding of patriotism, which this organization, through the means of this hall, exerts upon this large body of people every year, can hardly be measured.

I mention these facts to you in closing, so that you may know what this organization is doing, the kind

of work that it is doing, and to say to you that it needs your sympathy and your help. (Applause.)

THE CHAIRMAN: A young man of this city recently said to one of our prominent citizens, a big doer of good deeds, that the church had lost its usefulness. If this be true, we have indeed fallen upon grievous times. But we of the Memorial Hall Association believe that that is not true. We believe that the church is stronger and better today than ever before. The church is the best ally of the Grand Army of the Republic. If the church at any time becomes an impotent power, an impotent factor in the force of this country, then a body blow will be struck at patriotism, the cardinal principle of the Grand Army of the Republic.

The church teaches morality and right living. The Grand Army of the Republic teaches patriotism and right living, and the two go hand in hand, and are the bulwark and the safeguard of this mighty republic.

One of the most notable exponents of our faith is the Reverend Herman Page, whom I now have the pleasure of introducing to you. Dr. Page.



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